NUMB. XX.

THE PLAIN DEALER.

Tum pater Anchiſes Lachrymis Ingreſſus Obortis :
O Nate, ingentem luctum ne quære tuorum :
Oſtendent terris hunc tantum fata, neq; ultrà
Eſſe ſinent ——— VIRGIL.
Heu miſerande puer ! Si qua fata aſpera rumpas,
Tu Marcellus Eris. ——— Ibid.
Diſcite Juſtitiam Moniti, & non temnere Divos. ——— Ibid.

FRIDAY, MAY 29. 1724.

SIR,

YOU obſerved, very juſtly, in One of your late Papers, that no Figure in Life can be more graceful, and amiable, than That of a wiſe, and good, Father; with Reſpect to an Only Son, who poſſeſſes, and deſerves, his Indulgence.

THAT Lover of Mankind, *Hortenſius*, gave us, lately, a fine Example, of the Force of this Truth: But I look back, upon it with Anguiſh, becauſe I judge of his preſent *Pain*, by the Exceſs of his paſt *Pleaſure*.

THO' *Hortenſius* had, properly, but One Son, he was, in ſome Senſe, the *Common Father*. — Nothing ever was carried higher than the *Manlyneſs* of his Heart, except it's *Sweetneſs*, and *Humanity*: For he was ſoften'd, by the benevolent Overflowings of a Pity, that touch'd him, at once, in the two *Extremes* of Senſibility! His own *Joys* were damp'd, by Other People's *Afflictions*; and his private *Sorrows* chear'd, by the *Proſperity* of thoſe who hated him. — He not only *forgave*, readily, the moſt malicious of his Enemies; but, that he might be ſure to do it, generouſly, he *forgot* the very *Injuries*. — Even his *Faults* were no other, than the unſucceſsful Reſult of his *Virtues*; for acting rather by the Meaſure of his *Mind*, than of his *Power*, he provok'd the Diſappointed; to whom the *Will* is no *Obliger*. — His *Wit* could fear no Rivals, but his *Courage*, and his *Honeſty*: — And every Perſon who ſhall read this *faint* Character of his Excellence, has been oblig'd, by the *Effects* of it; with Regard to the Publick Intereſt; and the Ornaments of Society.

SUCH *was Hortenſius!* — and ſuch *Hortenſius is*; if yet he may be ſaid to *be*, after the Death of that dear *Son*, he *liv'd in*; and into whoſe fine Mind he had pour'd out, and transfus'd, all the Fullneſs of his Virtues; with a Kind of Hope, in *Him*, and *His*, to have immortaliz'd his very *Body!* and to receive, from future Ages, in the Honours paid to his Deſcendants, the Tribute of that *Praiſe*, which his own, declining Life, is, now, too ſcanty to make Room for.

HE, who knows the Father's Proſpect; and how ſuddenly *Death* has blaſted it; having ſnatch'd away the Son, when juſt blooming into Manhood; and, already, the *Companion*, and the *Friend*, of his Father! never look'd on, without Joy; — never oblig'd, without Gratitude; — never thought on, without Tenderneſs; — never hearken'd to, without Wonder! muſt be touch'd with a lively Senſe of what that Fate brought with it; which *tore*, from ſuch a Parent! (who, before, had loſt the Mother,) ſuch a Son; to leave him, *Joyleſs*; with the *future* World before him, like a bleak, and barren *Deſart*! — And the *paſt*, more dreadful ſtill, by a thouſand goading Tenderneſſes; which cling for ever to the Memory; and torment, and ſting, Reflection.

WHAT is Life, when we conſider it under the Accidents it is liable to, but an unreſting Conflict, in the Dark, with Labours, Doubts, and Diſappointments! — One, ſuch, Loſs, as *Hortenſius* has ſuſtain'd, in this lov'd Son: (and ſo felt, too, as *Hortenſius* feels it) ſerves, for ever, to imbitter *Hope*; and draws Gloom enough over the Mind, to put a Stop to our wild Purſuits, of Riches, Power, and Reputation.

WHEN I compare the preſent Calamity of this Gentleman, with the Satisfaction he is fallen from; — with that ripening Expectation; — that obſerving Vigilance; that unſpeakable Succeſſion of little Tranſports, and tender Triumphs; — and all that Train of *Noble Weakneſſes*, which warm, and open, the humane Heart, upon theſe dear, and ſoft, Occaſions: I confeſs to you that I am *loſt*, in too quick a Senſe of his Miſery! — And I tremble, while I learn, from it, that we are expos'd, to it, moſt dangerouſly, on that ſtrongeſt, and unguarded, Quarter, whence we look for our *ſincereſt Happineſs!*

I MET *Hortenſius*, ſome Time ſince; and, letting down my Glaſs, by Accident, juſt as his Chair was paſſing me, my Soul was wounded, through my Eyes, at the moving Majeſty of his Sorrow. — He endeavour'd to have skreen'd it, behind the Greatneſs of his Spirit; and put me in Mind, when I was gone by him, of this fine, and natural Stroke, in *Shakeſpear*.

——— *She never* told *her Pain*;
But let Concealment, *like a* Worm, *i'the* Bud,
Prey, on her Damask Cheek: — ſeem'd, *all unmov'd*;
And ſat, — *like* Patience, *on a* Monument;
Smiling, *at Grief*!

IF a Man, who had embark'd himſelf, for ſome long Voyage, with his Friends, and his whole Family, ſhou'd have the *miſerable* Deliverance, to eſcape, alone, from a Shipwreck; and be thrown aſhore, upon ſome barren Iſland, whence he cou'd diſcern no Object round him, but the Swelling of the Sea, while it was covering the ſinking Heads of all, who were *near*, or *dear*, to him: and, to preſerve whoſe cheriſh'd Lives, he wou'd, Himſelf, have dy'd, with Pleaſure! — Could ſuch a *dreadful Diſtinction* be conſider'd as a Bleſſing to him? — Or, ſhou'd we not rather pity him, as the Perſon, of the whole Number, whoſe Lot was leaſt ſupportable? And to which, a thouſand *Deaths* were preferable!

YET, methinks, Mr. *Plain-Dealer*, tho', to loſe a Worthy Son, muſt be acknowledged a *trying Miſery*;

Miſery, It is a Fate, ſeverer ſtill, to be the Father of *Unworthy* One. ——

——— *And live, to* feel,
How, ſharper than a Serpent's Tooth, *it is*,
To have a thankleſs Child!

Shakeſpear *in* King Lear.

SHEW me a Good Man, whoſe paternal Care has been rewarded with Contempt, from the ungrateful Object of his Tenderneſs: — Who ſees his Name diſgrac'd, by the ſordid Qualities of an *Heir*, from whoſe expected Excellence he had promis'd Himſelf an Encreaſe to its Reputation: — Who lives, convinced, That he is hated, avoided, and wish'd *dead*, by a Wretch, whom he has given *Life* to! and from whoſe Virtues, he had flatter'd himſelf, that his Old Age wou'd find a Comfort! and his Memory retain a Glory! — *Such a Father* ſhall look, with a Kind of Envy, on *Hortenſius*; and be the only Perſon capable of weighing his Diſtreſs, without Agony.

THE Impartiality of Time, and Reaſon, placing in the ſame Degree of *Fame*, thoſe who poliſh'd, and inſtructed, Nations, with thoſe who govern'd, or conquer'd, them; *Hortenſius* need not bluſh, to ſee his Name, rank'd with *Princes*. — I will therefore inſtance an Example of a vaſter Miſery than his own, in the *Greateſt Monarch* of our Age: (why did I not ſay *of any Age?*) I mean the *CZAR* of *RUSSIA*: — A Prince! whoſe Actions will draw after him a Blaze of Glory, and Aſtoniſhment, through the lateſt *Depth* of *Time*! and warm the Hearts of Poſterity with the ſame generous Reverence, for the Name of this immortal Emperor, which we, now, feel, at Mention of *Alexander the Great*: or the firſt, and nobleſt, of the *Cæſars*.

THERE can be very few of your Readers, who have not heard the *Czar* accus'd of one of the moſt ſhocking Kinds of *Cruelty*, with Regard to the Death of his Son, the late *Prince Royal*, — But moſt of 'em, I believe, are ignorant, that This, great, and generous Sovereign, was ſo free from the Guilt of that ill-grounded Imputation, that he pardon'd his Condemn'd Son, in Perſon, in the moſt tender, and moving Manner, after he had been *ſentenc'd to Death*, not by the *Czar Himſelf*, but by a Convention of the *Senate*, and *States*, of *Ruſſia*, Eccleſiaſtical,—Civil,—and Military:— for having (to uſe the very Words of the Sentence) *Form'd a Deſign to get the Crown even in the Life-time of his Father: oppoſing, and undermining, all his glorious Improvements; and ſoliciting Inſurrections, of Rebels, at Home; and the Aſſiſtance of a Foreign Army, to accompliſh the Deſtruction of them.*

I COU'D produce the moſt authentic, and undeniable, *Evidences*, that, throughout the whole Courſe of this great, and private, Affliction, the *Czar* diſcover'd more, of the *Vaſtneſs!* the *Humanity*! and the *Firmneſs*, of his *Soul*, than in all the Publick *Torrent*, of his Dangers; and his Victories! — And, I think, I may challenge the moſt partial Admirers of *Antiquity*, to produce any Thing, ſo humane! ſo heroic! ſo *God-like*! as this *Letter*! even from their greateſt, and moſt honour'd, Characters. — It was writ, and deliver'd, by the *Czar*'s own Hand, to the Prince Royal, his Son, on the 11th Day of *October*, in the Year 1715.

Extract of a LETTER, *from the* Czar *of* Ruſſia, *to his Son, the Prince,* Alexei.

My SON,

'YOU cannot be ignorant, ſince it is known to all the World, to what Degree our People groan'd, under the *Swediſh* Oppreſſion. We ſaw, by the Loſs of our *Maritime Provinces*, that we were cut off from all Commerce with the reſt of the World. You know, too, what it coſt us, in the Beginning of this War, to qualify ourſelves to give a Check to ſo implacable a Violence. But God led us by the Hand, till we were worthy, in our Turn, to make That Enemy tremble, before whom Others had, long, trembled. — We owe this, next to God, to our own, unwearied Toil; and the Affection of our *Beſt Children*, our faithful, *Ruſſian Subjects*.

'BUT, if, while I am viewing this Proſperity of my Native Country, I turn an Eye to *my own Poſterity*, my Heart is oppreſs'd, with *Grief*, that is too heavy for my *Glory*. — I ſee *You*, my Son! rejecting all the Means of becoming able to protect, or govern, what I *leave* you. — You will not ſo much as hear of *Warlike Study*; tho', by *that only* we broke out of the Obſcurity, we were involv'd in; and made ourſelves *notic'd*, among Nations.

'I DO not exhort You to *make War*, without Reaſon; — I but preſs you to learn the *Art* of it. I cou'd place before your Eyes many *Proofs*, that This is neceſſary: But I will name the *Greeks*, only; for They are united in the ſame *Faith*, with us. — What, but Neglect of *Arms*, was the Occaſion of their Ruin? Reſt, and Idleneſs, had weaken'd them, till they cou'd *ſubmit*, even to *Slavery!* you miſtake, if you think it Enough, for a Prince to have *Good Generals*. Men look up, to the *Head*: They examine *his* Inclinations, that they may conform themſelves to his *Genius*. — My Brother, in his Reign, lov'd Magnificence, in *Dreſs*, and *Horſes*. The Nation, (*before*, not at all inclin'd that Way) form'd their Taſte, upon their *Prince*'s; for they imitate *us*, as well in our *Good* Qualities, as our *Evil*.

'YOU hate *War*: — You neglect it: — You will, conſequently, never learn it. — *How*, then, can you *command others?* — How *judge*, of the Rewards, which ſhou'd encourage the *Deſerving?* or the Puniſhments, which muſt be held out, to the Eyes of the *Unworthy?* — You will ſee, and hear, for ever, with the Eyes, and Ears, of *Others*; and reſemble a young *Bird*, that holds out its *Bill*, to its *Feeder*.

'I AM a *Man*, my Son, and I *muſt die*. — To *whom* ſhall I leave the Accompliſhment of my Labours? To *whom* ſhall I commit the *Protection* of my *People*? — To One! who, like the *ſloathful Servant*, conceals, the Talent, he ſhou'd employ! — and falls back, from the glorious *Truſt*, which God has diſtinguiſh him by!

'REMEMBER your long Obſtinacy — and become generouſly aſham'd, of this Perverſeneſs in your Nature. — How often have I reproach'd You! Nay, ſometimes, you have compell'd my Affection even to *puniſh* you! — For ſome Years paſt, I have ſcarce ſpoke to you. — Yet, All This avail'd Nothing. — It was *loſing* my *Time*! — It was *ſtriking* the *Air*! — All your Pleaſure conſiſts in Indolence! Things, of which you ought to be aſham'd, becauſe they make you contemptible, compoſe your *deareſt Delight!* — Nor do you concern yourſelf for the Conſequences, it may produce to your Country!

'AFTER having weigh'd, in my ſecret Breaſt, the fatal Tendency of your Proceedings; — After having reflected, how long, *in vain*, I have endeavour'd to redeem you: I have thought fit, by my own Hand-writing, to give you the *laſt Reſult* of my Will. — With this Determination, however, — to wait, ſtill, ſome Time longer, before I put it in Execution; to expect, or *hope*, your Amendment. — If *not*, You are, hereby, to know, that I will *deprive you of the Succeſſion*; as a Man would cut off a *gangren'd Member*.

'DO not fancy, that, becauſe I have no other Child but *You*, I only write this to *terrifie* you: By *God's Pleaſure*, I will, moſt certainly, *do it*. For, ſince I ſpare not my own *Life*, for the Welfare of my People: *Why* ſhou'd I regard your *Honour*, who are not fram'd for *becoming* it? — I will, rather, tranſmit my Dominions to a *Stranger*, who ſhall be *Worthy* of them, than to my own *unworthy Son*, who can neither defend, nor adorn, them.

Sign'd, in the Original, with the Czar's *own Hand,*
PETER.

I WILL cloſe my Paper, here, and *revere* the Soul of this Great Prince, in Silence! for, to ſay any Thing, in Praiſe, or Explanation, of ſuch a Letter, were to treat my Readers, like *Inſenſibles*. — If there lives any One Perſon, who can conſider it, without *Love*, and *Veneration*, for its Writer, His Apprehenſion muſt be ſo groſsly cover'd, with a Cloud of Dulneſs, and Stupidity, that He is deſtin'd to remain *impenetrable*, by Honour, Juſtice, or Humanity!

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